

Talking Points for DCI Meeting  
16 September 1987

New Defense Currents in the NATO Lake

The first salvo in a new political confrontation over defense in Europe may have already been sounded in the release by Agency France Presse (AFP) of consideration by Helmut Kohl's government that a conventional defense in Germany was actually possible. As the public in general becomes aware that NATO and the West commit as many or more men to arms and spend more on defense, the defense debate in Europe over the next year may well be more important for the future of the Alliance than anything that has occurred over the last 10 or 20 years.

Because of the upcoming deliberations over some kind of Atlantic to the Urals conventional arms control initiative, good data on the level of the defense commitment by both sides will be made public by deliberate government release or through calculated leaks by the elected opposition. Certainly at the very minimum the Soviets will leak that part of the data on comparisons suggesting a menacing NATO effort and "responsible" Soviet counter-effort.

Important intelligence findings critical to the above include:

- The SOVA study allegedly referenced in the AFP press articles indicating that the Soviet's forward deployed forces are some 150,000 men short of the previously assessed strength and would need two to three weeks of reinforcements to be ready for inclusion in an offensive against the West.
- The current Interagency Intelligence Memorandum being drafted under the auspices of Major General Budge which indicates that NATO nations currently have as many men under arms as does the Warsaw Pact.
- A study being done in SOVA and already widely briefed indicating that NATO defense expenditures exceed those of the Warsaw Pact.
- And finally, a rising suspicion among analysts that demographic constraints in the Soviet Union have been such that the Soviet armed forces are likely to be at lower manpower levels than they were in 1980, i.e., lower than levels currently estimated by the Intelligence Community.

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The public at large and many of the governments of the West have long believed that NATO, or the West, has been weaker in every aspect of conventional warfare capability than the Warsaw Pact. If the data above are released suddenly on an unprepared public, NATO security policy and procurement efforts are likely to suffer to the detriment of the Alliance as a political unity and as an effective defense coalition. If so, as the conclusions of the studies mentioned above are made public, the political opposition to the Alliance in NATO countries is likely to react dramatically and perhaps irrationally and counterproductively against NATO defense efforts. Among the propositions posed will be:

- "If NATO commits more men and money to defense than the Pact, why is the Pact still an overwhelming threat?" or
- "If NATO is committing that much more than the Pact in defense funds, there is the basis for a dramatic cutback."

There is probably time, however, to use the data to our benefit in support of current programs to encourage conventional defense of Europe because General Rogers' oft stated dictum that NATO can defend for only three days before nuclear weapons are needed will no longer appear oppressively self-evident. Conventional defense, if effectively portrayed, could be seen as attainable: NATO could build a more positive self-confident image for itself; the basis for defeating defeatism among the populations of NATO Europe would be at hand; and the East could be faced with a far more resistant negotiating partner than was evident earlier in the year.